



To: House Committee on Finance  
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition  
Date: April 13, 2021  
Re: **SUPPORT Budget Article 16 Section 6 to establish a permanent funding stream for affordable housing and SUPPORT bill 5687 to invest in newly established housing production fund**

The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a goal to protect and promote quality, affordable healthcare for all. The Coalition also includes hundreds of community members around the state who support the Coalition's mission.

We strongly support Article 16 Section 6 and Bill 5687 that will improve access to safe, affordable housing because **investments in housing are an investment in healthcare!**

COVID-19 has exacerbated Rhode Island's existing housing crisis. Data compiled prior to the pandemic demonstrates that access to safe affordable homes is critical to improving health outcomes and an important component in managing health risk, quality of life, and overall 'down-stream' healthcare spending:

- Safe and affordable homes limit exposure to COVID-19 as well as environmental toxins like lead and asthma triggers and reduce exposure to hazards such as exposed wiring; in essence, making investments in housing is an important up-front investment in health. (<https://www.housingworksri.org/Research-Policy/Focus-Areas-Economic-Development-Health-Education/Health>)
- Affordable housing has been shown to contribute to a reduction in 'downstream' healthcare costs and to improved access to care. One 2015 study by the Center for Outcomes Research & Education (CORE) found that, "When Medicaid-covered residents moved into affordable housing their health care experiences changed dramatically. Over the following year, they used more primary care, had fewer ED visits, and accumulated lower medical expenditures than in the year before they moved in. Many also reported better access to and better quality of care." (<https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/resources/health-housing-exploring-intersection-between-housing-and-health-care-13360>)

**Housing is an important social determinant of health and a critical issue directly linked to the impact of the pandemic on our state's minority communities.** Sustained investment is urgent to community wellbeing and health outcomes.

Although funding from previous housing bonds has been vital to creating and preserving additional long-term affordable homes, the fact remains that these funds are temporary. **An additional, dedicated, permanent source of funding is necessary to produce housing on the scale needed in Rhode Island.** The proposed method to generate this new revenue appears to be a sound pathway to achieving this goal.

**We urge you to support Article 16 (Section 6) and bill 5687 because Rhode Island can and should be a state where all residents are able to live in safe, healthy and affordable homes in thriving communities.**

**Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners include:** Economic Progress Institute, Mental Health Association RI, RI NOW, RI Parent Information Network, RI Health Center Association, NAACP Providence Branch, United Way of Rhode Island, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, Foster Forward, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, Oasis Wellness Center, RI Community Food Bank, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), Thundermist Health Center